

# Essex County Standard

Friday, September 16, 2011

www.essexcountystandard.co.uk 65p



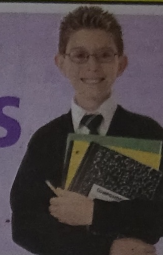
## IS IT STUMPS FOR CRICKET FESTIVAL?

CASTLE PARK EVENT UNDER THREAT: BACK PAGE



## FREE SCHOOLS GUIDE

SEE PAGES 81-83



**Ready:** County councillor John Jowers at the site of Colchester's new travellers' site, where work will start on Monday.

Picture: Steve Brading  
0049468-03



# Work starts on travellers' site

**EXCLUSIVE**

Wendy Brading

CONSTRUCTION work is to start on Monday on Colchester's new travellers' site.

After seven years of debate, the diggers are set to move in to start work on the site off Severalls Lane.

More than 5,000 residents have objected to the development and Stewart St Clair Pearce, who lives next to the

site, has lodged an appeal at the European Court of Human Rights.

He had hoped Essex County Council would delay building the site until his application had been heard – a process which could take

up to seven years.

However, John Jowers, Essex County Council's portfolio holder for communities, said he believed the risk of contravening the law was "negligible".

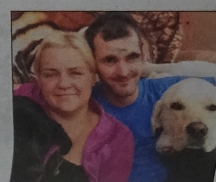
He thought it was out-

weighed by the risk of losing almost £2million of Government money if work was not started as soon as possible.

wendy.brading@nqe.com

Full story: page 2

## NEWS



### It's the worst year of our lives

Six months after their daughter died, a West Bergholt couple's guide dogs are attacked and their home is raided by burglars.

Full story: page 10

### U's legend: don't close my home

Former Colchester United legend Bobby Hunt has urged the borough council not to sell his home.

Full story: page 5

### 3,200 back fight to save Abbots

Colchester has given a resounding message to its council – don't close Abbots Activity Centre.

Full story: page 7

### Jumbo: back to drawing board

A plan to convert Colchester's famous Jumbo water tower has been rejected by councillors.

Full story: page 8

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## Standard

## NEWS

Runners conjure up pounds for charity at Colchester's annual Run4Fun. Full story: centre pages



## MEMORIES

Residents took a step back into Colchester's past and enjoyed our heritage for free. Full story: p18



## COMMENT

'I have lived in Myland for 40 years and it does sadden my husband and me to see Colchester, and Myland in particular, being destroyed in the way it is'

Readers' letters: p24-25

## LEISURE

Have an audience with Colchester's symphony orchestra. Leisure: p77-80



## SPORT

Anthony Wordsworth is hoping to be the U's set-piece specialist. Sport: p90-96



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## WEATHER

## TODAY



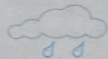
**Sunny spells**  
High: 19C  
Low: 11C

## TOMORROW



**Sunny spells**  
High: 16C  
Low: 8C

## SUNDAY



**Showers**  
High: 16C  
Low: 9C

## TIDE TIMES

HIGH water at West Mersea:

Today	2.55am*	3.05pm*
Tomorrow	3.23am*	3.35pm*
Sunday	3.54am	4.08pm
Monday	4.28am	4.46pm
Tuesday	5.07am	5.32pm
Wednesday	5.58am	6.32pm
Thursday	7.04am	7.52pm
Friday	8.27am	9.19pm

For Colne Point, deduct 15 mins; for Wivenhoe and Rowhedge, deduct five mins; for Heybridge Basin, add 20 mins; for Walton, deduct 35 mins.

\* denotes tide higher than four metres

# 'There is no getting out of it'

## County hall defends decision to start work on new travellers' site in town despite resident's human rights court challenge

EXCLUSIVE  
Wendy Brading

THE diggers are set to move in on Monday to start work on Colchester's new travellers' site.

The development off Severalls Lane has been vociferously opposed by High Woods councillors and thousands of residents.

A legal challenge is still going through the European Court of Human Rights.

But John Jowers, Essex County Council's portfolio holder for communities, said while he understood the objections, it was time to be realistic and move on.

He said: "Colchester is in an unusual position because we stopped the site in Haven Road, so we have to replace it.

"There is no getting out of it. We have looked at 62 sites and this is the one which was considered to be the best.

"Of course, it has caused mayhem ever since. Rightly or wrongly, no-one wants a travellers' site near them. But we had to make a choice. Someone has to make the decision."

The site will have 12 pitches, a manager's office and two day rooms, and Mr Jowers said the area would be extensively landscaped.

Travellers wanting to move in when the site is completed next summer will have to apply to a



**Furious:** Tracy St Clair Pearce, at her rare breeds farm, with councillor Gerard Oxford, who believes work on the travellers' pitches should wait until the court has ruled on the appeal.

CO45250-02

waiting list. If selected, they will be allocated a pitch on which they can stay indefinitely. They will be obliged to pay council tax.

Mr Jowers said it was a coincidence the work was starting on the day more than 50 pitches are due to be emptied at Dale Farm, near Basildon, Europe's biggest illegal travellers' site.

Stewart St Clair Pearce, who lives next to the site at the Seven Sisters Rare Breed Farm, which is run by his sister Tracy, has lodged an appeal at the European Court of Human Rights against the development.

However, Mr Jowers said the county council had decided the risk

of breaching the law was "negligible". The decision to carry on has infuriated High Woods councillors Gerard Oxford and his wife Beverly, who are long-time campaigners against the travellers' site.

Mr Oxford, who is due to go to County Hall today for a meeting over the issue, said: "I am so angry about this. The European Court of Human Rights has found sufficient grounds to allow this to go to court."

"There is a question of Mr St Clair Pearce's human rights and the validity of the planning consent. What is the sense of paying nearly £2million to build something which may have to be pulled down?"

**Campaigner:** Stewart St Clair Pearce, who lodged an appeal against the creation of a new travellers' site off Colchester's Severalls Lane at the European Court of Human Rights. Work on 12 pitches is now starting regardless. CO43273-02

Mr St Clair Pearce added: "The project should not be taken forward until this question has been resolved. It is arrogant. They are basically going ahead with a project which may have to later be dismantled."

"This is taxpayers' money, money which should be spent on something which is really needed."

But Mr Jowers said: "Our view is the risk of the case being rejected by the European Court of Human Rights is negligible. However, the risk of losing the money from Government is far higher."

"This is the right thing to do to understand the objections, but have to be realistic."

Tracey Turner-Tretz, of European Court of Human Rights press service, said: "The lodging an application before the European Court of Human Rights does not itself have a direct effect on national proceedings complained of."

"However, in exceptional circumstances, where the applicant concerned would otherwise risk serious, irreversible harm, the court may decide a state should take interim measures provisionally while it continues its examination of case."

"This usually consists of requesting a state to refrain from doing something, such as returning individuals to countries where it is alleged they would face death or torture."

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## Rape accused can't explain DNA find, court told

A STUDENT has claimed a man tried to rape her near her flat at the University of Essex.

A jury at Chelmsford Crown Court heard the student was out with friends during freshers' week in October when she went to one of the nightclubs on the campus.

The court was told the woman started dancing with another student and he kissed her.

Later on, the two of them left the club and he is alleged to have tried to rape her.

The prosecution has alleged Soban Bin Ikram pushed the woman to the ground and tried twice to rape her.

Ikram, 22, of Sainty Quay, Lightship Way, Colchester, denied two charges of attempted rape.

Samantha Leigh, prosecuting, said the woman and friends had been drinking before they went to the Level Two club at the university.

The woman started dancing with Ikram and he kissed her, but she did not like the way he did

this.

The two of them left the club and Miss Leigh alleged Ikram pushed the woman to the ground as they made their way back towards her flat.

He tried to rape her, but she managed to get away from him.

She was shocked and shaken by what had happened to her, the jury heard.

Miss Leigh said forensic tests later revealed Ikram's DNA on the woman's tights.

He was arrested after the inci-

dent and admitted he had been the club and had left with the defendant. But he told officers it had been no attempt to rape.

Ikram admitted pushing, student, but said once she fell tried to help her up.

There had been no attempt to rape her, Ikram told the jury.

Miss Leigh asked him explain how his DNA was found on a pair of tights the woman was wearing at the time. Ikram, her he could not account for.

The trial continues.